



September 2, 2021

Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary  
Federal Communications Commission  
45 L Street, NE  
Washington, D.C. 20554

Re: **SHLB Ex Parte Notice with Pole Attachment Principles to Expedite Broadband Attachments for Anchor Institutions and Their Communities - WC Docket No. 17-84**

Dear Ms. Dortch:

The Schools, Health & Libraries Broadband (SHLB) Coalition<sup>1</sup> is pleased to submit this letter and attached document into the record of the above-referenced proceeding, WC Docket No. 17-84. SHLB strongly supports the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC's) efforts to solve the Digital Divide by promoting widespread broadband deployment and affordable service to all areas of the United States. Unfortunately, the high costs and delays in gaining access to poles often hinder the ubiquitous broadband deployment that is so urgently needed. SHLB observes that the United States has not yet reached Goal #4 in the National Broadband Plan to make gigabit connectivity available to the nation's community anchor institutions. Our members report that the pole attachment and replacement problems – due in part to the lack of clarity around the policies and rules – often deter and delay efforts to upgrade their broadband connections and services for anchor institutions, especially in rural markets.

To address these ambiguities, the SHLB Coalition convened a group of its members to draw up the attached principles to guide pole attachment and replacement policies and procedures going forward.<sup>2</sup> The principles attempt to reflect a balance of interests among state and local governments, pole owners, broadband providers, and anchor institutions. For instance, we recognize that state and local governments have been working to improve their pole attachment practices, but they often lack the resources to handle the increase in pole attachment requests. The principles thus call for additional funding for pole owners to help expedite their pole attachment decision-making and implementation. The principles also call for non-discriminatory treatment of broadband service providers and pole owners to avoid favoring one sector over another. The principles recommend the adoption of just and reasonable rates for pole access that reflect actual costs. The principles also suggest that the costs of

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<sup>1</sup> The Schools, Health & Libraries Broadband (SHLB) Coalition is a non-profit public interest group with about 300 members from around the United States. We support open, affordable, high-quality broadband for anchor institutions and their surrounding communities. More information and a list of our members is available at [www.shlb.org](http://www.shlb.org).

<sup>2</sup> While SHLB Coalition members participated in these discussions, these principles are submitted on behalf of the SHLB Coalition alone and should not be attributed to any of its members. The SHLB Coalition is an independent public interest group and is not a trade association.

pole replacement should be shared equitably among pole owners and attachers. Moreover, the principles encourage process reform in order to expedite the resolution of pole-related complaints and disputes.

The SHLB Coalition respectfully submits these principles and requests that the FCC move forward with a rulemaking proceeding to address these critical gating issues in the near future. As of this writing, Congress is on the verge of enacting significant infrastructure legislation that would appropriate several billion dollars for broadband deployment and to make broadband service more affordable. Clarifying the nation's pole attachment policies – along the lines of the attached principles – could go a long way toward solving the Digital Divide and fulfilling Congressional intent.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Windhausen, Jr." with a stylized flourish at the end.

John Windhausen, Jr.  
Executive Director  
Schools, Health & Libraries  
Broadband (SHLB) Coalition  
1250 Connecticut Ave. Suite 700  
Washington, DC 20036

Attachment

cc: Travis Litman